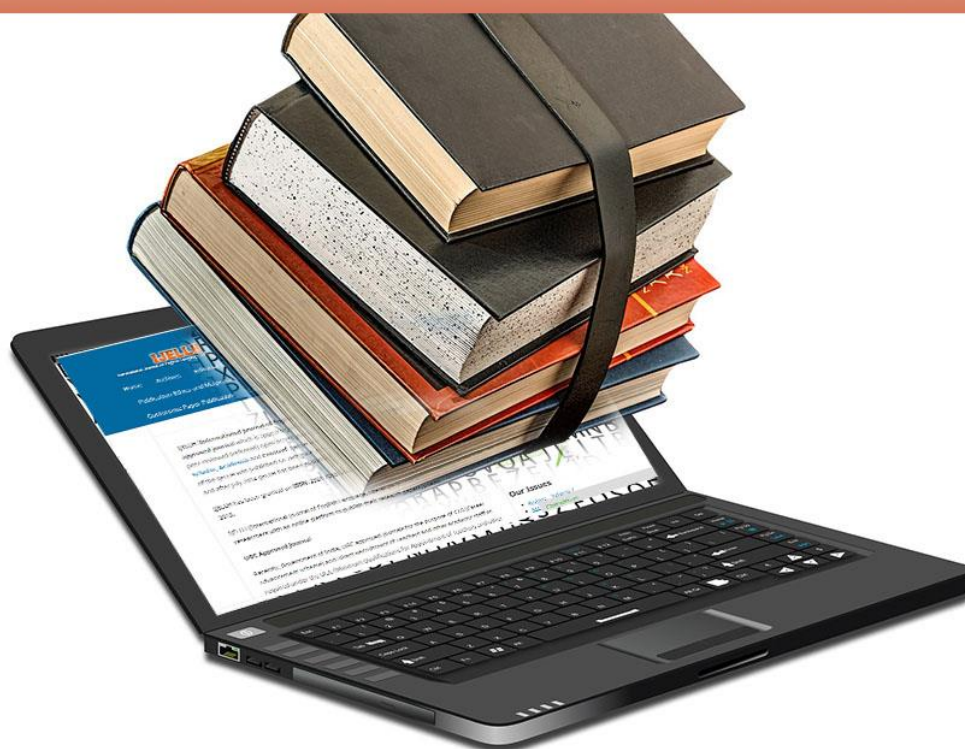


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Narcissism in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

Abstract

The world is running towards single entity shadowing its indifferences and cultural dissimilarities yet there remain remnants like Islamophobia. The main cause for Islamophobia appears to rise from 9/11 attacks. Muslims and Islam are treated as radical. Everything that is attached to Islam seems to scare westerners. Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Home Fire* exhibits how Islamophobia is dealt in western world. This paper focuses Islamophobia with special reference to Narcissism tracking the treads of the history of western policy which perpetually results in brooding over 9/11 attacks. This research manifests the western outlook on Muslim identity and its Radicalisation. The explication of Narcissism is discerned in the characters of this novel : such as a "Male chauvinism" in Parvaiz Pasha, "westoxification" in Karamat Lone and "Terrorism" in dangerous Farooq.

Keywords: Islamophobia, radicalisation, narcissism, Islam, westoxification

Kamila Shamsie, the author of seven novels tries to stir political events and scrapes through sensitive matters. Her latest novel *Home Fire* which is longlisted for Man Booker prize, is tinted with current political events, cultural stigma and its stings. The novel *Home Fire* is an adaptation of Greek myth *Antigone*. She scripted this novel on the advice of Jitender Varma. The novel deals with the issues of citizenship and restrictions imposed on citizenship which problematize immigrants.

At the outset of the novel Isma is seen in an interrogation office, on her way towards United States of America for the pursuance of Ph.D. The remnants of her early childhood traces back to the Oedipus father Adil Pasha who leaves his family behind and turns out to be a Jihadi. Unlike Oedipus myth, the novel *Home Fire* does not embrace any incestuous relation of Adil Pasha. Yet identical shame which he brings up on his family is his joining as Jihadi. After the departure of her father, her mother tends them but dies early. Isma carries whole encumbrance of twin brother and sister. Isma in the pursuit of her dream leaves the grown up twins in the care of aunt Naseem.

Eammon, the son of home secretary, encounters Isma at a coffee shop and there blooms a delicate intimacy yet it fades away as it blooms. In their meeting they discuss their fathers: Isma discloses Eammon about her idiosyncratic father who is obsessed with the Jihadi movement and informs she is unaware of his existence. Eammon backs up his father Karamat Lone, a home secretary who disowns his own Muslim identity and is highly westoxified but Isma denies his perception of his father. When they are apart Isma hands him an envelope to post it to her family but he takes it personally to Isma's family and hands it to them. As the novel progresses Parvaiz the twin brother gets enticed with the ideology of Farooq who is a member of ISIS. Farooq tortures Parvaiz with physical oppression to make him realise how his father had been tortured at Bagram. The harshness

of reality makes him join ISIS to avenge his father's death. As the events unfold Isma informs British intelligence what her brother had been through.

Parvaiz, now a member of media wing of ISIS, contemplates over his bloomer, disdains Farooq and his own idiocy and sets his heart on to head back home. To ease him out of the situation, Aneeka tries to entangle Eammon in her love tryst grappling him in her sexual depravity. She does it deliberately and diligently to bring her brother out of Syria. At one fell swoop Parvaiz who is a prodigal son endeavours to advance towards the British embassy to escape from his own doom. He is futile in his attempt and is put down by Farooq. On the other side Eammon reveals his love affair to his father and requests him to favour Parvaiz and to be let out of Syria. The shrewd Karamat Lone knew it beforehand and confiscates Eammon into a room. Oblivious of the fact, Aneeka bids to call but gets no response from Eammon. Aneeka comes to know her dear brother's death and recedes into redundancy. She arrives in Karachi to take back the corpse of Parvaiz to London. Karamat Lone refutes the consent to bring Parvaiz's dead body into home land as he went to ally with the enemies to fight against London. Aneeka accompanies her brother's dead body in Karachi. Eammon sneaks out of his room to join Aneeka and he succeeds in it. At the end Eammon is locked around his waist by explosive belt by some of the terrorists. Leaving him to his own destiny, every one flees except Aneeka. Finally they greet death in their embrace.

Narcissism is a glittering conceit extorted from Greek mythology. Young Narcissus falls in love with his own image and is doomed to his destruction. It denotes satiating oneself from one's own idealised framing of oneself. However, in terms of psychology it is well defined by W. Keith Campbell and Roy F. Baumeister: "Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is one the group of cluster B disorders that also includes antisocial, histrionic, and borderline. NPD involves three elements: an inflated view of the self, a lack

of warmth or empathy in relationships, and the use of a variety of strategies for maintaining the inflated self-views.”(423)

As the title suggests this article clearly examines a few characters in the novel *Home Fire* in the Narcissistic point of view and how they foresaw their downfall. Karamat Lone: A Westoxified Projection delineates his own community and endears foreignness. He is self-obsessed that he embellishes himself and pontificates the students against Islam and their traditions at Muslim school in Bradford.

But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: Don't set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently—not because of racism, though that does still exist, but because you insist on your difference from everyone else in this multiethnic, multireligious, multitudinous United Kingdom of ours. And look at all you miss out on because of it.(87)

He protrudes his self-inflated view of being home secretary thus denigrating his own community. Just like Narcissus he also lost himself in looking at the pool of western world: admiring himself he disregards his own community. He is also injected with another Narcissistic element: an urge for power is displayed in him: he revokes the citizenship of dual nationals to meet his own end .The end is an urge for power of amalgamation of authority. To touch that celestial point of authority he has to prove that he is not one of the Muslims. At another instance Karamat Lone exposes another Narcissistic personality disorder i.e. he doesnot empathize with Parvaiz's corpse. He lacks concern over Aneeka and her dead brother. He sees her family as “other” who do not fit into his migrated land .Watching him at close encounter Terry his wife warns him of his mental ailment and advices him “Be human. Fix it”(254).

Another character in the novel is Parvaiz Pasha –A male chauvinistic, an innocent roosting chicken, a Prodigal son and an innocent roosting chicken tries to top over the roof to avenge his father's death but his roosting trails off. Like the prodigal son he fathoms over his fault over agglutinating with terrorism. Unbounding shackles of terrorism and violence, he tries to reconcile with his past but he is deprived of his life. Parvaiz Pasha seems to represent many young boys who join terrorism. Kamila Shamsie traces out a basic reason why this youth is so attracted to terrorism, in her interview with Chris McDonough and Stephanie McCarter, Kamila Shamsie asserts,

One of the things that was striking to me is that, in the research I was doing, someone sent me a video that ISIS used for propaganda. It was not a violent video. It was quite the opposite, sending out greetings on the Muslim holy day of Eid. This video showed very young and incredibly good-looking men. I mean they were all gorgeous. And that was being used to recruit other young men. It was very striking to me just how beautiful they were, every single one of them.

Another trait which Farooq perfuses in Parvaiz is male chauvinism. Parvaiz is instigated by Farooq to be a man. He admires the emasculation of manhood in Farooq consequently he denounces his sisters' superiority over him. An example of his male chauvinism is further exemplified from the novel *Home Fire*. When Parvaiz is alone not willing to speak to any one, Aneeka questions over his moodiness and teases him with fun Parvaiz responds saying "You're just a girl. You don't understand "(142). This is the juncture where he develops his own haughtiness not willing to be bound by advice and he keeps secret to himself and doesnot want to reveal her. Such an attitude manifests the quality of Narcissism a male chauvinism. Just like Narcissus who lost himself watching at his own image Parvaiz loses himself watching himself in terrorism when trying to avenge his father. He inhaled the fury of his father through the words of Adil pasha. Just like

Karamat Lone he also doesn't show sympathy over the convicted. A few lines of *Home Fire* support this

When he'd first seen it he'd felt sorrow for the man with the courage to try to look brave with a blade at his throat, whose only crime was the nation he'd been born into. But this time what struck him most powerfully were the man's clothes, the same shade of orange as the prison jumpsuit in which his father had died. His vision expanded; he saw beyond the expression of the individual kneeling in the desert to the message the caliphate sent with his death: *What you do to ours we will do to yours.*(149)

Farooq a felonious pervert guides innocence of Parvaiz to meet his own end i.e. to fight on behalf of ISIS. This is an evidence of Narcissistic quality portrayed in the character of Farooq. He deceives parvaiz in believing in irking idiocy terroristic ideal his father followed into some heroic grandiosity. Farooq speaks of Adil Pasha's (Parvaiz's father) heroism saying, "Do you think he wanted the world to be as it is? No. But he saw it for what it is. And having seen it he understood that a man has larger responsibilities than the ones his wife and mother want to chain him to."(128) He lacks human empathy i.e. one of the narcissistic quality which casts its spell on Farooq in killing many innocent civilians. He is drained of human empathy that is evident when he kills Parvaiz texting him saying, "You're a dead man, my little warrior" (166) His narcissistic ideal deprives him of humanness and loses himself to terrorism just like Narcissus. Radicalisation rising out of western Narcissism is another element which the novel wants to convey: The early instincts in the novel are displayed in the novel through Eammon's dialogue "Cancer or Islam - which is the greater affliction?"(21).Eammon's father Karamat Lone the home Secretary defames the Muslim religion saying You know I grew up a believing Muslim. Didn't harm anyone but myself with it"(107). Commenting on such unwanted identity Tahir Abbas, a university lecturer accounts to say how the notion regarding Muslim religion changed in the past years

Although conceptual overlaps exist, the British discourse on racialized minorities has been transformed from “color” in the 1950s and 1960s³ ; to “race” in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s⁴ ; to “ethnicity” in the 1990s⁵ ; and to “religion” in the present climate.⁶ Here, Islam has the greatest profile. British popular discourse has shifted from seeing minorities as homogenous entities to discerning differences within and between “Blacks” and Asians; then, within South Asians, to differences among Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis; and finally among Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. Religion has emerged as a major social signifier (27).

Muslims are branded with radicalisation by western countries but it is western people who are radicalised whenever there is terrorist attack people connect it to Islam. An extract from the novel *Home Fire* sets an example of such an attitude can be traced to the radicalisation such as, “ The 7/7 terrorists were never described by the media as “British terrorists.” Even when the word “British” was used, it was always “British of Pakistani descent” or “British Muslim” or, my favorite, “British passport holders,” always something interposed between their Britishness and terrorism. *Well, you have quite a voice when you decide to use it*”(38). They say the animosity which rose against Muslim religion is due to radical thinking. A post-colonial thinking which stands against such view is portrayed in Franz fanon’s “The wretched of the Earth” says why colonised people try to become radicals is in his own words

It has always happened in the struggle for freedom that such a people, formerly lost in an imaginary maze, a prey to unspeakable terrors yet happy to lose themselves in a dreamlike torment, such a people becomes unhinged, reorganizes itself, and in blood and tears gives birth to very real and immediate action. Feeding the moudjahidines* posting sentinels, coming to the help of families which lack the bare necessities, or taking the place of a husband who has been killed or

imprisoned: such are the concrete tasks to which the people is called during the struggle for freedom(56).

The line “*What you do to ours we will do to yours*” (149) from the novel echoes the line of Bin Laden which is directed in a letter against America hints this “ While seeking Allah's help, we form our reply based on two questions directed at the Americans: (Q1) Why are we fighting and opposing you? Q2)What are we calling you to, and what do we want from you? As for the first question: Why are we fighting and opposing you? The answer is very simple: Because you attacked us and continue to attack us.” The actual reason behind these attacks can be found in the essay by ward Churchill who says 9/11 attacks are cause of American policy against other countries and its interference in other countries’ political matters. He says in his essay, "Some People Push Back" written on September 12,2001.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, a few more chickens -- along with some half-million dead Iraqi children -- came home to roost in a very big way at the twin towers of New York’s World Trade Center. Well, actually, a few of them seem to have nestled in at the Pentagon as well. The Iraqi youngsters, all of them under 12, died as a predictable -- in fact, widely predicted -- result of the 1991 US "surgical" bombing of their country’s water purification and sewage facilities, as well as other "infrastructural" targets upon which Iraq’s civilian population depends for its very survival. [See The Secret Behind the Sanctions -- How the U.S. Intentionally Destroyed Iraq’s Water Supply , by Thomas J. Nagy, The Progressive , September 2001.]

This radicalisation is pushed back to U.S through 9/11 attacks. It is because excessive Narcissism of U.S caused it’s downfall of its empire causing Islamophobia. When one considers the origin of the word “Islamophobia” takes us back to the report of

Runnymede Trust in 1997. Later Farah Elahi and Omar Khan tried to interpret Islamophobia saying,

In this context it is worth reminding ourselves of Runnymede's 1997 definition. The original Islamophobia report states that the term refers to three phenomena:

- Unfounded hostility towards Islam;
- Practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities;
- Exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs.

We mainly agree with this broad definition. In our view, the focus should be on the second and third phenomena. To clarify the scope of how Islamophobia should be understood in a social and policy context in Britain, we offer the following definition of Islamophobia”

Definition: Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism.

This is obviously a short definition. We have also developed a longer-form definition, building on the United Nations definition of racism generally.”(7).

Recently Pakistani English Literature seems to elevate Islamophobia. The novels like H.M Naqvi's Home Boy and Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist display the sensitised relations between Muslims and Americans. So one may doubt that the writers like Kamila Shamsie supporting terrorism and it's radicalism at the expense of innocent lives which were lost in different attacks. To comment on this Kamila Shamsie speaks to Jakarta post in an interview saying , “ By not saying “they” as if a terrorist and their families belong to the same group. I would hope anyone who reads my novel will see that what I'm saying there is that you have to look at every individual case and decide how to respond.” She implies on understanding of the other and advises to introspect oneself at the events directed against Muslims.. She pleads on the case of every immigrant who are

troubled in foreign nations. To assert Kamila Shamsie's view Claire Chambers states in her article :

What is more, both Shamsie's characters (particularly the siblings) and her readers listen to, or at least hear, the other's arguments. Although not necessarily punishing or acquitting, the situation asks them to make judgments. At the same time, the novelist decenters dominant listeners, giving a platform for others to speak too. Shamsie records Parvaiz's screams of pain at Farooq's second round of torture, an ordeal that Parvaiz himself instigated so as to share the pain his father went through at Bagram air base (211).

Thus *Home Fire* novel is a political novel pleading the case of British Muslims and makes a plea to avert antagonistic attitude towards Muslims. So she chose a Greek play *Antigone*. The play ends with chorus stressing divinity of wisdom likewise *Home Fire* ends with a tragic ending, forcing the readers to introspect themselves of their imminent actions violating human code of understanding, sympathy and cultural acceptance.

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